

**Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network
Technical Committee Meeting
August 17, 2004, AM
Radisson Hotel, Austin, TX
2004 Chair - Paul Eubank
2005 Chair - Alden Miller**

Attendees: P. Eubank, Chair of Committee (LAMR/ALFL), A. Miller, Committee Member (WABA), F. Pannebaker, Committee Member (BEOL), M. Schmitz, Committee Member (PECO), F. Revello, Committee Member (FOLS), B. Carey, Committee Member (LYJO), S. Burrough, Committee Member (CHIC), K. Zimmermann, Committee Member appointed to represent SAND (BEOL), D. Perkins, Committee Member (SOPN), M. Johnston (CAVO), W. Lauritzen (WABA), S. Linderer (FOLS), M. Frank (FOUN), B. Bingham (IMR), G. Willson (Great Plains CESU), G. Bowser (Gulf Coast CESU), M. Davin (LAMR/ALFL), S. Braumiller (IMR stationed at CHIC), H. Sosinski (SOPN), D. Vela (Texas State Coordinator), M. George (IMR stationed in Austin)

Meeting called to order at 8:00 AM. Introductions were made.

- I. I+M National Update – D. Perkins made a presentation describing recent updates. The I+M program continues to have strong congressional support. The SOPN is scheduled to be fully funded in FY05.
 - A. Emphasis that much of the work being completed by SOPN staff can be used by programs within each park.
 - B. There are numerous ways that SOPN can benefit from other I+M networks that preceded us. There are many opportunities for efficient use of conceptual models, protocols, databases, and landscape analyses that have already been completed.
- II. Overview of SOPN Progress – The above presentation also highlighted progress made since the July Technical Committee meeting. The presentation will be made available to meeting attendees.
 - A. The grassland conceptual model task agreement was completed with Dr. Tinker and Dr. Hild at University of Wyoming.
 - B. At the recommendation of John Gross (I+M WASO Landscape Modeler) SOPN will hold off on developing a task agreement for a landscape vulnerability conceptual model until after several other I+M task agreements have been completed.
 - C. Process of creating a task agreement for a grassland bird inventory at Sand Creek was also presented.
- III. Review Draft Annual Report and Workplan
 - A. Draft 2004 Annual Report and Budget - D. Perkins presented the committee with the abbreviated draft Annual Administrative Report for

FY04 and the abbreviated version of the finalized FY04 Workplan for comparison.

1. Many inventories have been or are scheduled to be completed by the end of the fiscal year.
2. A prioritized inventory list outlining the holes in the SOPN inventories was developed.
3. A staffing plan has been developed (see agenda item III.B.2).
4. MOA designating the SOPN data manager as Point of Contact for NPSpecies was signed by all SOPN superintendents.
5. Held scoping sessions at all 11 SOPN parks. Created an access database with prioritized lists of SOPN natural resources and stressors.
6. Current status of Biological Inventories was presented. The difficulties with The Nature Conservancy of Texas task agreement due to delays and change in personnel were discussed. D. Perkins will call them after the meeting for an update to the recent resignation of the point-of-contact at The Nature Conservancy.
7. The Committee noted that it would be beneficial to explain items in the budget output like Spatial Odyssey and PCS more thoroughly.

B. Draft 2005 Workplan and Budget

1. Presented 2 budgets - Full amount (\$389,000 vital signs and \$29,000 water quality) and reduced amount (\$150,000). It is very likely that SOPN will receive the full amount of funding for next year.
 - a. If SOPN only receives \$150,000 then there will be very little money other than salary and travel.
 - b. NPSpecies certification will be a major project in FY05 (see agenda item V).
 - c. Inventory work will consist of data entry from recently completed reports and the new inventory projects discussed at the meeting (see agenda item III.B.4).
 - d. **Action Item: Stream/river and reservoir conceptual models will be developed in FY05.**
 - e. **Action Item: Conceptual model workshops (approximately 3) will be held in FY05 (see agenda item IV).**
2. Staffing needs and plan
 - a. D. Perkins presented a draft staffing plan.
 - b. Committee tentatively approved plan, but decided that some the function of each position should be given more details. G. Bowser also urged the committee to think about what positions would be desired irregardless of the funding we are scheduled to receive.
 - c. It was noted that we may want to consider a permanent biologist in 2006 as it may increase the quality of applicants.

- d. The committee thought that there should be more details about what the interns will do in years after FY05.
 - e. M. Johnston noted that we should add the term geologist or physical scientist to the Biologist/Ecologist/Botanist position. More details should also be given for this position.
 - f. The committee emphasized that this document should remain flexible and adaptable to the evolving SOPN.
 - g. **Action Item: A subcommittee was formed to provide and evaluate the details described above. B. Carey, G. Bowser, and D. Perkins will make up this committee.**
3. Discuss approximate amounts for vital signs and inventories.
- a. D. Perkins presented the prioritized list of inventory needs that was approved by the technical committee in July, 2004. SOPN can spend the \$30,000 that we borrowed from our FY04 inventory account on filling inventory holes. In addition we may also use the vital signs account to pursue inventories that are essential in developing a vital signs monitoring program.
 - b. The wetland inventory at Bent's Old Fort was discussed. Park staff feels that the arch wetland will factor into the vital signs monitoring, but thinks that it wasn't adequately covered by the initial inventory conducted by Colorado Natural Heritage Program. There is a potential for two listed fish species to be present. Hydrology of the wetland, which may be important in developing a monitoring program, was also not studied.
 - c. Vegetation mapping at parks was discussed. This is an important component for development of vital signs. This will eventually be funded by WASO Inventory dollars, but only LAMR has been initiated and the other parks are far down on the national inventory list. It was noted that we may be able to do abbreviated vegetation mapping for important species as Chickasaw had previously started a mapping project for Johnson grass.
 - d. Inventories at the recently acquired areas at Pecos were discussed. These areas were acquired after SOPN was allocated its inventory dollars and therefore SOPN should eventually receive additional inventory money to fund these areas. B. Bingham indicated that he thought this was true and that our currently allocated inventory dollars should be spent on land that was in NPS ownership at the time of money allocation.
 - e. Bat inventories are likely to increase our % detected, but are unlikely to be part of a vital signs monitoring program.
 - f. A question was raised about what deep water inventories meant. D. Perkins and B. Carey noted that The Nature Conservancy did not have a boat so they were limited to seining up to hip depth. The committee decided that deep water inventories should be not be funded in FY05. P. Eubank noted that Texas Parks and Wildlife

currently gill nets at Lake Meredith and we should contact them for these inventories. B. Carey noted that Lyndon B. Johnson is hoping to get deep-water inventories done for free through the Lower Colorado River Authority. Pecos also has the potential to get some of this done through the New Mexico Game and Fish.

g. G. Willson suggested contacting D. Licht (Northern Great Plains I+M Coordinator) about his museum search task agreement.

h. Action Item: The technical committee decided that task agreements should be established to fund the wetland inventory at Bent's Old Fort (approximately \$15,000) and the vegetation inventory at Sand Creek with the re-payment of FY04 inventory money that SOPN had used to forward fund the grassland conceptual model. The technical committee decided to pursue vegetation mapping (\$40,000) with WASO.

4. Update on Conceptual Model Plan – covered in opening presentation and draft FY05 workplan.
5. Update on Prairie Restoration Plan – not discussed, see attached document.
6. External/peripheral stuff accomplished – not discussed, see attached document.

Meeting Temporarily adjourned at 12:00 PM to ensure adequate time for lunch and the Board of Director's meeting.

Meeting again called to order at 4:00 PM.

IV. Scoping Part II Sessions / Conceptual Model Workshops

A. Goals of the workshop were outlined by D. Perkins.

1. Review draft conceptual models
2. Add justifications for important natural resources and link stressors to the natural resources. This information will be incorporated into the SOPN prioritized natural resource and stressor access database.
3. Develop list of potential vital signs that could be monitored for each natural resource

B. Number and type – they will be 2-3 days in length.

1. Grassland
2. Freshwater/Riparian Zone
3. Forested systems

C. Who to invite? National grasslands, USFS, NRCS, Corps. We are required to see what other federal agencies are doing. State agencies. Subject matter experts.

D. Timeframe and Hosts –

1. Parks that have offered to host a workshop and/or next year's annual meeting were Fort Union in Las Vegas, NM, Chickasaw at the Goddard Youth Center, Bent's Old Fort, and Washita Battlefield. Post

Meeting Note: During the SOPN+4 SCC meeting, a grant writing workshop which may be held at College Station, TX in FY05 and the possibility of combining this with a SOPN workshop was discussed.

Action Item: G. Bowser and D. Perkins will communicate on this issue.

2. Possibility to combine with NPSpecies certification and annual meeting was discussed. **Action Item: The technical committee preferred to keep conceptual model and NPSpecies Certification workshops separate. It was preferable to combine different conceptual model workshops together. G. Bowser had recently attended the Gulf Coast I+M Conceptual model workshops that combined ecosystems and it worked well. D. Perkins said this will work as long as our budget is approved reasonably early in FY05. Currently the only conceptual model task agreement established is the grassland one.**
3. The first workshop will take place in early 2005 (as soon as our budget is allocated and a draft conceptual model is completed).

V. NPSpecies Certification – H. Sosinski presented.

1. An analysis of the data entry needs for NPSpecies has been completed. WASO I+M has promised to help SOPN with this data entry. H. Sosinski will be contacting Steve Fancy to follow up on this promise.
2. H. Sosinski presented an overview of what will take place at the NPSpecies certification workshops.

VI. Museum agreements for vouchers

1. B. Carey discussed the recent museum arrangement analysis that was conducted at Lyndon B. Johnson. He stated that during the development of the “Study Plan for biological Inventories: Southern Plains Network”, this item was discussed. At that time SOPN did not anticipate a large number of specimens and SOPN decided that this would be left to individual parks.
2. D. Perkins noted that we do not have a museum arrangement for mammals and the inventory resulted in some voucher specimens, but not arrangement in place. He also did not anticipate a large number of specimens in the near future. However it might be a good idea to get a status check on which parks do have arrangements with museums and for which taxa.
3. **Action Item: B. Carey will circulate an email to SOPN parks inquiring about the status of current museum arrangements.**

VII. Strategic plan

1. This item was discussed during the discussion of the SOPN charter at the Board of Director’s meeting.
2. A 5-year strategic plan is supposed to be developed by technical committee by October 2004 as outlined in the SOPN Charter.

3. D. Perkins has discussed this with 4 I+M coordinators, none of which had developed a specific strategic plan. Many of these networks had, or were planning to incorporate the aspects of a strategic plan in their Phase III report. B. Bingham thought that the Sonoran Desert Network may have developed a Strategic Plan.
4. **Action Item: The BOD decided with the Technical Committee that a strategic plan should be developed for SOPN by January 2005. This plan will outline the development of the SOPN Vital Signs monitoring plan and will briefly describe SOPN activities over the next five years. This plan will incorporate the Staffing Plan that received tentative approval at the Technical Committee meeting that preceded the BOD meeting.**

VIII. Scientific advisory panel

1. D. Perkins presented list of potential names from that had been developed in scoping meetings or found while conducting SOPN activities. Stated that other networks had paid them honoraria, some had just paid travel. These panels had taken different roles in different networks. There will also be some peer review of Phase I, II, and III reports by the I+M program.
2. Some committee members expressed concern that any panel created needs to be certain that they comply with FACA.
3. **Action Item: Technical committee decided that we not assemble a specific science advisory panel at this time. We can continue to keep lists of names and specialties and then contact these people as needed. The two CESU coordinators on the SOPN board (G. Bowser and G. Willson) also stated that they would be willing to review or help find reviewers for our reports or for other needs that develop.**
4. Post-meeting note: B. Bingham has to leave the meeting before this item was addressed. In a conversation between B. Bingham and D. Perkins on 8/20/04, B. Bingham expressed support for the above arrangement. He said there have been lots of problems with science advisory panels and the roles they play within the network. He thought that contacting specific people for specific tasks was a good approach.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.